

Message Text

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22

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 /077 W
----- 072583

R 300844Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3679

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY MEXICO CITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MX, TS

SUBJECT: VISIT TO TUNISIA OF RABBI ABRAHAM HERSHBERG

REF: MEXICO 8160

1. ARRIVING IN ADVANCE OF SCHEDULE AS REPORTED REFTTEL, RABBI ABRAHAM HERSHBERG VISITED TUNISIA FROM JULY 22 TO 26. AT OUTSET OF HIS VISIT HE ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT AND SOUGHT APPOINTMENTS WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA, FOREIGN MINISTER, AND GRAND MUFTI OF THE REPUBLIC. ACCORDING TO BRIEF PRESS REPORT, HERSHBERG CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER HABIB CHATTI ON JULY 24.

2. RABBI HERSHBERG CALLED ON AMBASSADOR JULY 23 TO EXPLAIN PURPOSE OF HIS MISSION, WHAT HE HOPED TO
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ACHIEVE IN TUNISIA, AND WHAT HE HAD ACHIEVED THUS FAR.

IN ADDITION TO GOT OFFICIALS, HERSHBERG SAID HE PLANNED TO CONTACT GRAND RABBI OF TUNIS. AS PROMISED BY EMBASSY MEXICO, RABBI HERSHBERG HAD MANY NAMES TO DROP. HE ASKED FOR NO ASSISTANCE FROM AMBASSADOR BUT CONTACTED EMBASSY OFFICER LATER BY PHONE TO SEEK AID IN ARRANGING CALL ON PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. WE ENCOURAGED HIM TO CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS THROUGH GOT.

3. GOT ATTENTION GIVEN TO RABBI HERSHBERG APPEARS TO BE MINIMAL. SECULARIZED TUNISIA SEES THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AS A POLITICAL QUESTION OF NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PALESTINIANS AND GOT PROBABLY EXPECTS LITTLE TO COME FROM PROPOSED CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON THE ISSUE. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI MAY HAVE RECEIVED RABBI HERSHBERG OUT OF RESPECT FOR HIS STATUS AS GRAND RABBI OF MEXICO AND OUT OF CONSIDERATION FOR TUNISIA'S DOMESTIC JEWISH COMMUNITY.
MULCAHY

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